IronWatch

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Undead Zombie by “imm0rtal reaper”

ABYSSAL TIDINGS

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy third birthday to the **Ironwatch**! Many thanks to you viewers out there who have helped make this possible through your support and dedication, from artists and painters, to storyweavers and battle reporters, to photographers and tournament players. Without your supply of articles, we would never have made it this far, or even had a single issue! So thank you, for helping support the official Mantic fan publication.

While we'll be going into greater detail about this in the coming days on the **Ironwatch** webpage, you might have already noticed that we're working hard to make a lot of formatting changes, some long-overdue, in order to help make your magazine even more enjoyable. Please be sure to leave us feedback about what you think, and where you'd like us to go in the months and years to come.

Of course, we are always on the lookout for more content, so please don't be shy! GenCon, as well as countless local games and tournaments, are occurring so send us your battle reports, your custom army lists, your pictures, your stories, your art; Let us help put your passion on the page.

Whether you're a brand-new reader or a supporter since Issue #1, thank you for reading, and Welcome to the Watch!

-Austin

Cover art by Boris Samec
Title art by Mark Peasley

Corrections: Our email link for messaging us on the Iron Forge page was incorrect, and has been corrected to the proper address.

Please note that, while we here at **Ironwatch** *attempt to deliver you the best products and ideas we can, we cannot guarantee the balance of any scenarios or special rules presented herein. If you find any errors, grammar mistakes, or rule imbalances, please contact us on the Mantic Forums (Look for the discussion labeled "Ironwatch Issue X Feedback") and let us know what we could do to improve your fan-produced magazine. If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or editing for our magazine, please let us know on the feedback discussion as well so you can get in on the action!*

All models used in this publication are from the respective author's own personal collections, and any models displayed herein are not intended to challenge the status of the copyrights of their respective owners. All rights are reserved to their respective owners.

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Dwarven Throwing Mastiff by Matt Gilbert

THE IRON FORGE

Welcome back to the Iron Forge.

On display this month for you we have:

- Geoff Burbidge, and his Mechanites. Be sure to check out his color test for the robotic Dreadball team.
- New Iron Forge painter Toulouse Miniatures, with some outstanding Deadzone miniatures

Keep tuned in next month for more fantastic models, and if you have some painted Mantic minis you'd like featured to possibly become an Iron Forge artist, please email high resolution photos of your miniatures to ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com.

Forgefather Stormrage Veteran by Paul Scott

Please include your name and/or Mantic forum name. You can also provide descriptions of your paint jobs and titles if you'd like!

GEOFF BURBIDGE

Color test for the Mechanites

TOULOUSE MINIATURES

TOULOUSE MINIATURES

TOULOUSE MINIATURES

Undead Revenant Regiment by Juanje

MANTIC CALENDAR

If you have Mantic-related events or tournaments you'd like to add, please PM Matt Gilbert or Austin Peasley on the forums or **email us** with your event's date, time, location, cost, a brief description, and a URL for more information.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and indicates where Mantic games are being enjoyed, and not necessarily where Mantic will be making an official appearance (Save for the Mantic HQ, of course!).

August

7/30-8/2 **Gencon**
$80 per person
9:30 AM—5:30 PM
Kings of War Tournament is 5:00 PM to 12:00 AM on 8/1.
Kings of War Big Battle is 8:00 PM to 12:00 AM on 7/31.
Learn to Play Kings of War, at various times each day.
Gen Con is the original, longest-running, best-attended, gaming convention in the world!
100 South Capitol Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46225, United States

8/5 [Kings of War V2 Demos]
8:00 AM—2:00 PM
Learn how to play the newest edition of Mantic's game of Mass Fantasy Battles!
Quimera, Calle de Jorge Juan, 112, 28028 Madrid, Madrid, España

September

9/18 [Kings of War Final Tournament]
9:00 AM—12:30 PM
This event is a part of the In the Ludo Ergo Sum Charity Game Days.
Alcorcón, Madrid, España

9/26 [Conquest 2015]
This event features lots of different tournaments for all sorts of games, as well as cosplaying and possibly game playtesting.
The Shoreham Centre, 2 Pond Rd, Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5WU, United Kingdom

A game of Deadzone: Quarantine by Mike Tittensor

October

10/3 [UK Clash of Kings 2015 - The Final] [£29.99 per person]
9:00 AM—12:30 PM
Who will be crowned the best Kings of War general in the United Kingdom? Come join in the fun to find out!
SANCTUARY GAMING CENTER St. Michaels & All Angels Church, St. Michaels Street, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire NG17 4GP

Two dueling Kings of War generals at Adepticon 2015. Courtesy of Mantic Games

THE Q&A MAILBAG

Organized by Matt Gilbert

The Q&A Mailbag feature (Formerly 'Q&A With Chris Palmer') contains questions from the community via the forum, answered by Chris Palmer, Web and Events Coordinator at Mantic Games. If anyone wants to ask a question they can on the **Mantic Forums**.

What are the rules of conversions and Mods for the Mantic games (Dreadball, Kow, Deadzone, etc.)? Are there any?

Ultimately it's your hobby – we're more than happy for you to modify the figures or convert them – the more creative the better! Certain competitions like Clash of Kings or any painting contests we run may have certain restrictions, like an army must be X% Mantic or how many miniatures must be represented in a unit should you want to multi-base, but casually it should just be about what you want to build and paint.

Can you give us a timeline for the KoW KS2 mini's retail releases? I know lots of people are keen to get their hands on the Abyssals and Nature armies but also individual units such as the new Soul Reavers or the Basilean Arbalests.

Sure – July is the start with Abyssal Dwarfs and Elves, Undead and Dwarfs follow that up in August, including the new Soul Reaver cavalry. The Ogres and Orcs are likely to be September, including the new Berserker Braves. The Basileans, Goblins, Forces of Nature and the Forces of the Abyss are all 2016 releases, exactly which order hasn't been decided yet.

Are there plans for more retailer support during the launch of new releases (demo copies for physical stores with gaming space, etc.)?

We've always done an awful lot of retailer support which isn't always shouted about 'on the front end'. From the Pathfinders to POS, sample copies of the books to free starter sets to demo the game to customers with, we're already big on retailer support and have plans to further it after launch with organised play, more POS, rankings websites, earlier information on new releases, more imagery – oh and some non-Kickstarter miniatures (dubbed retailers exclusives) so that they have something our hardcore fans couldn't get elsewhere.

A lot of activity-based events are in the works to try and get customers to go into stores and try the game – that's the hardest thing alongside actually convincing some of the retailers to use the support we give them!

*****

That's all for this month, but if you have your own questions, don't forget to submit them on the **Mantic Forums**. Thanks Chris!▪

Adepticon Mars Attacks display by "The Terrain Tutor"

TALES FROM THE CRIPPLED GOOSE

THE NYMPH'S TALE: "AN ABSENCE OF TIME"

By Mike Tittensor

Kingdoms of Men Wizard by Andre Kritzinger

"I look down from the summit of the hill, my trees around me. They sigh around me, breathing for me, hearing for me. A crowd has gathered, torches in their hands. They are simple farming folk. It is one of the holy days. They have them. I do not know why. They look up to me as I stand at the edge of the trees, expectation, awe, fear in their eyes. They know that I am not like them, both more and less. At the back of the crowd, a sandy haired girl stands in a plain, undyed linen shift and glass beads in her hair. In her face is anger and sadness.

At the front of the crowd is a man, strong, broad shouldered. She watches him almost hungrily. He is young but powerful, wearing a belted tunic. I think that I see him working in the fields below or perhaps that was in a different place or (what is the word?) time. His eyes are wide, unnaturally so. The older man next to him carries a skin from whose neck a dribble of milky liquid falls to the earth. I smell mushrooms from near the marsh. The older man pushes the younger forward and he begins to walk up the hill towards my cave. Beyond his shoulder I see the tears on the cheeks of the sandy haired girl. She turns and walks into the darkness.

He walks closer. I smell him. I feel the wave of time flooding over me as he approaches. It exhilarates and fills me. How do they tolerate the ecstasy of the passing of events, the tender caresses of history forming around them? He stands before me, his breathing heavy and erratic. He smiles. They always smile. They always will. They always have. He leans down and we kiss. He is happy, so so happy up until the moment his mortal heart flutters and stops. The crowd cries out in triumph. They always do. They

Undead Necromancer by Jim Kew

always will. I step back, the sensation of time ebbing like a fading scent of roses. I turn and walk into my cave where the mirror stands and look at myself. Sandy hair, plain undyed shift and beads in my hair. They smile. They always smile.

The farmers come and go. For a while ice laps around the base of my hill and then goes. Tall, elven folk ride North. For a moment I see a beautiful pale-skinned maiden with gems at my throat.

The farmers return. They build a new village far from the old one. They put walls around it. Then small, ironshod folk in coats of mail come. They build with stone and tar and sand putting a track around the base of the hill. I do not like looking at myself with a beard in the mirror.

The farmers move on down the valley and build in stone and wood. A man kills pigs. I hear him sometimes. On the wind I scent his beer. It smells like time. Do humans drink it to lose their sense of time?

A strange dark man comes from the East and builds a stone building with carvings of an eagle on its lintel. A bird of the air captured in the stone of the earth? He wears strange robes and chants when it is dark in a language unlike the farmers. His voice is not beautiful but moving. He approaches my cave but never enters. He falters at the edge and returns to his chapel, a mixture of longing and fear. I find myself with a pair of glowing wings sprouting from my back and some form of pantherskin tunic on many occasions. It itches. Then he is gone, laid in the earth like they all are.

Another comes. Young. Handsome. A knight. Dressed in burnished armour with a great sword and songs on his lips. He sings of far away lands and great adventures and his sadness for his absence from his family in a place called Primavantor. His horse is fine and he bears a golden necklace with a pendant in the shape of a broken heart. He sees me and comes with a faint, half formed smile but recoils and curses me with names such as “witch” and “ghost”. He runs from the hills calling down curses. I say nothing but do not understand. When I look in the mirror, my skin is pale as death, my lips dark and above the plunging cleavage of my fine gown are purple bruises around my throat.

She comes. I see her. The sandy hair now grey. The once tear-stained face now wrinkled and hate filled. There are still beads in her hair and she has power, terrible power

that smells of sulphur and ash. She has a pet, a companion, dark and brooding. It moves like water but is difficult to see. I feel fear but she sends it away to the base of the hill where it squats, its menace like brimstone. I cannot feel time around her. She takes my mirror from its stone table and I fall into it. Trapped inside, that gift from long ago, my mirror. I am now the frozen one. Now I am time. Now. I feel now. Now.

On my table there is a dagger driven into the stone. It is a wrong thing both in Man's world and mine. What has she done? She pulls out parchment and cards, inks and paints. She begins to draw. There are drawings on the wall. Bad drawings pulling more of that power into the cave. My trees. I think of my trees and try to remember their sounds. I cannot hear them. She comes again. Now I am no longer in the mirror. I and others are drawn out and placed on paper cards with a bone pen made from a dead hare, its blood the ink. She looks down at me and smiles. I stop.

A man stands over me holding the cards, rugged and dressed in mail and leathers. He is in pain. He is strong but in so much pain. He looks at the cards. I call to him. I feel his pain. He looks again at the cards, their texture like old skin and then chooses mine. She is behind him. She is angry, her face snarling like a cat. She holds a sword, a thing of steel and points it at his chest. I scream. I know I scream but I hear nothing. Then she is falling, a blade in her eye and I am no longer in the card. I am in a wood, a strange wood not made from my trees. There are great oaks but the wood is pensive and thoughtful. The trees murmur as they seek to understand what magic has been wrought here.

Elven Forest Shambler Regiment by Matt Gilbert

I felt the flow of time again. I turned to see him coming down from the cave above me. What was once my cave but will be no more. My trees have long since gone. I ran to the edge of the wood but some strange power stopped me from crossing the leathery boundary strip that skirted the wood. Was I still in the picture? Yet he stepped over the boundary and as he did so, he changed. His beard grew bushier, his shoulders broadened.

Instead of mail he was dressed in skins and leathers and his armour was of bark plates. A wreath of oak leaves bound his temples and in his hands he bore a mighty club and a wooden shield from whose front new fronds of growth sprouted. He smiled. We were happy there, yes, for a time, well, I at least was happy. I was his and he was the Guardian of the Woodland Path, the gatekeeper between my old world and his past. He knew that he must stand as a barrier between the two. Some tried to go past him but stopped when they saw. Travellers, merchants and pedlars skirted round the wood.

Kingdoms of Men Knight Regiment by "imm0rtal reaper"

Strange monsters slunk back into the trees unwilling to risk blows from the club, fear in their hearts. They yearned to step forth into the realm of Men but knew the look of his face meant that they would never make it past him. Yet we were happy. He was mine. I was his. I made necklaces from flowers to adorn his oak wreath, the wreath he

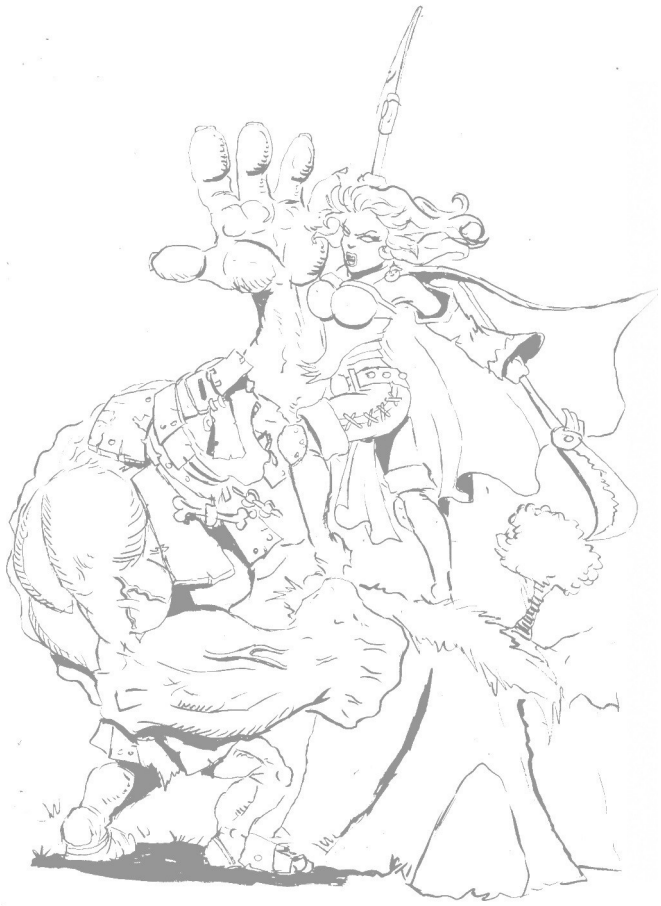
Basilean Panther Lancer Troop by "C M Minis"

could never lose and around the great oaken club, I draped wild flowers and dog roses. He smiled. We kissed but his heart endured. The first not to fade and still. I smiled.

Then the knight returned. He was older now but no less glorious. He went up to the cave past the wood. We saw him walk as if there was a pain of glass or a sheet of water between us. He did not perceive us but I saw her again, the sandy haired girl. She appeared young again, dressed in finery. She held out those accursed cards and pointed down towards us. She pleaded with the knight who nodded and, with that gleam of pride that comes only to the truly mad, he strode down the hill towards my guardian and me. Now he saw us.

Behind him, the sandy haired girl released the glamour around herself and appeared again as an aged grey haired crone with one eye and an oddly shaped skull. She grinned toothlessly

Elven Kindred Tallspears Regiment by Paul Mitchell



and waved a mocking little wave at me while playing with the glass beads in her hair.

Those beads. They are in another memory from a space where I did not perceive time. They mean something but I do not know. While she looks at me I cannot sense time. I turn to see my Guardian standing on the road as he has always done. The knight strikes at him, calling for glory and victory and the intervention of gods whose names I do not know. He is mighty, mightier than my Guardian. His sword burns with the evening light from behind the hill. His armour is thick and finely crafted.

I remember the little ironshod people and wonder if they made it. My Guardian steps back again and again under a rain of blows. His shield is broken and lies on the ground. The fronds of growth are blackened and

Undead Werewolf by Pete Harrison

dead, their gentle leaves burning as I watch. His mighty club is turning aside the knight's sword but each time only barely. Great notches are cut into it with every parry, the dents oozing dark sap like the forest's own blood. He holds it two handed now to resist the weight of the blows, the knight's blade dull red with the setting sun. Then I hear the crone's laughter, falling on the air like broken glass and my Guardian slows, his defence falters. The knight strikes and the great club shatters, leaving my Guardian with but a stump in his hands before him.

My Guardian steps back one last time, sweeping his foot back and putting his hand behind his back like a dancer. The knight begins to sing a paean of victory and raises his sword above his head to finish the duel. Only, he falters. He stops. My Guardian has thrown something from his left hand, a long knife of darkened iron. It sits in the left eye of the knight and he stops and sinks to his knees. As he leans forward the knife falls to the ground amid a stream of blood. My Guardian seizes it up and runs towards the edge of the wood, taking my wrist. "We must go, girl, now" I think that is the first time he has spoken to me.

He steps beyond the boundary and pulls me out beyond it. I feel a tearing pain and then…I am free. I feel time next to my Guardian. I hear the trees, all the trees. I look up at the cave and the crone is gone. I look back to my Guardian. His beard is less bushy. He is not as large as he once was but his smile is gentler. He tells me his name is Ventis Bard. A funny name. I like it. I do not have a name but he says he will call me Primavera. I have never had a name before. He tells me to follow the road to the village where a kindly man will give me work until he has finished what he needs to do in the cave. I nod and agree. I walk towards the village while he climbed the hill to the cave with the knife in his hand. I feel no time but it does not seem to matter.

As I approached the village, I heard a distant wail and time returned like a cold shower of rain. Rain that suddenly became very real and wet. I was cold. I sheltered beneath an oak tree. It sang to me and I placed one of

Ogre Captain by Grant Mahoney

its leaves in my hair so I could always hear it. I know he will come for me, soon."

The landlord wiped his hands on his bloodstained apron and regarded the girl. Blonde. Good figure. Face a little too sharp of feature to be truly beautiful but clearly wet from the rain and absolutely, definitely barking mad. Still a landlord (with a sideline as a freelance pig butcher) with work to do and customers to tend cannot be choosy. "You can sleep in the stable loft. A copper a day and board. Take it or leave it". Turning back to the Crippled Goose, the landlord watched his patrons coming in for the night. He smiled.

To follow:
The Knight's Tale
The Merchant's Tale
The Pedlar's Tale▪

FORGEFATHER SHIELD GENERATOR

By Peter—"Tek Thornisson"

Editor's Note: Peter has been kind enough to send us several terrain-making tutorials for the next few issues. While they don't have step-by-step written overviews, the materials are simple, and a picture (of a tutorial step) is worth a thousand words!

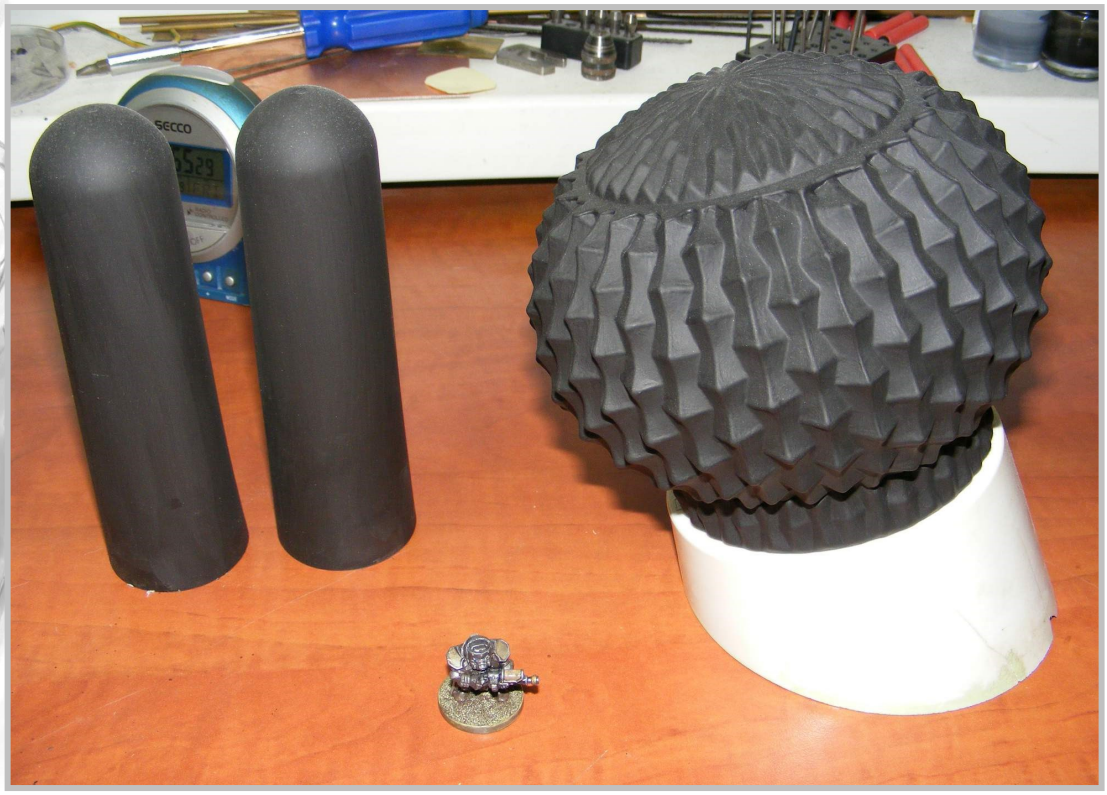
"I work until now only with high-density polystyrene-often colored has a smooth, tough structure.

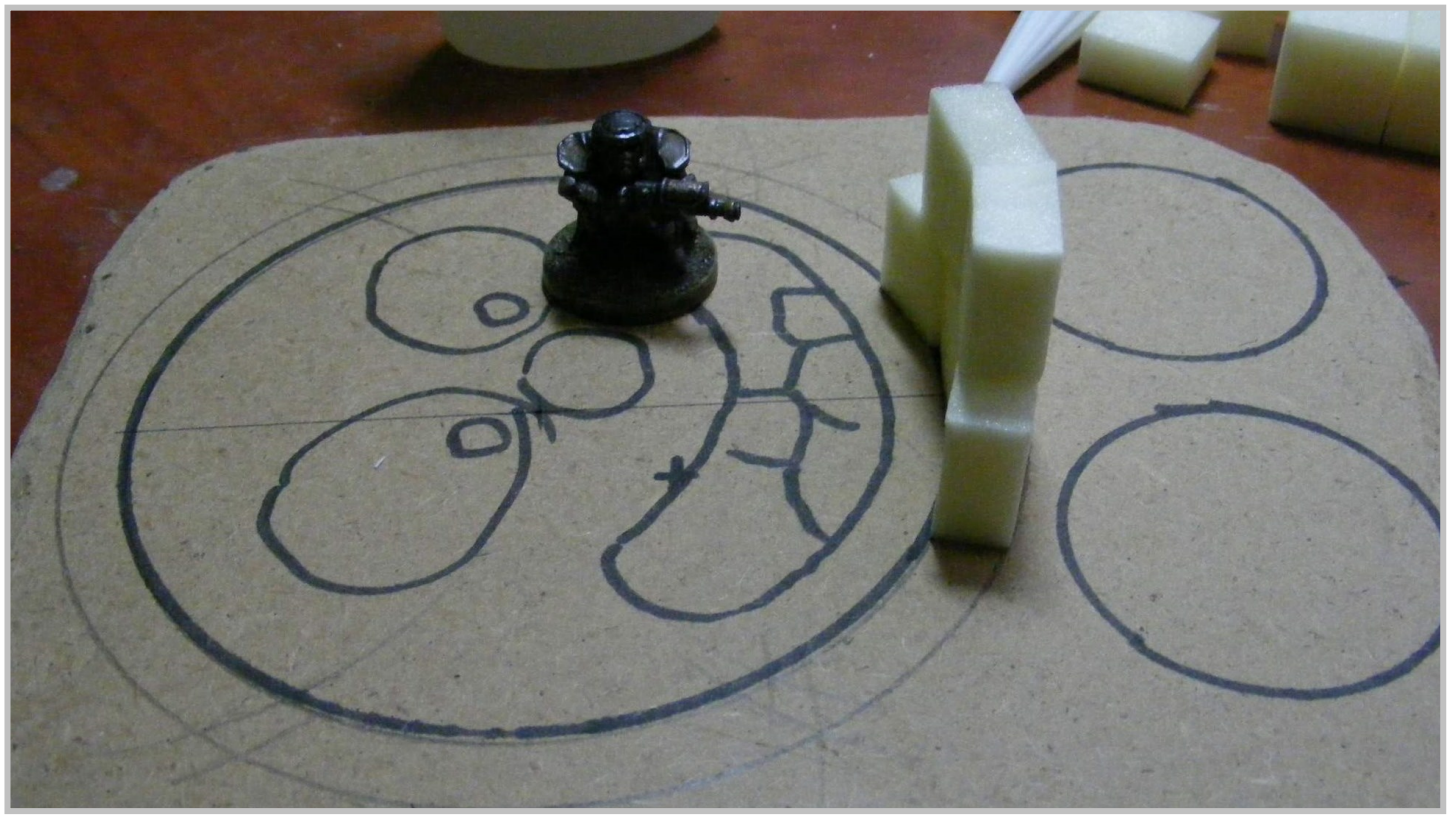
The only special tool I use is a desktop foam cutter from Proxxon.

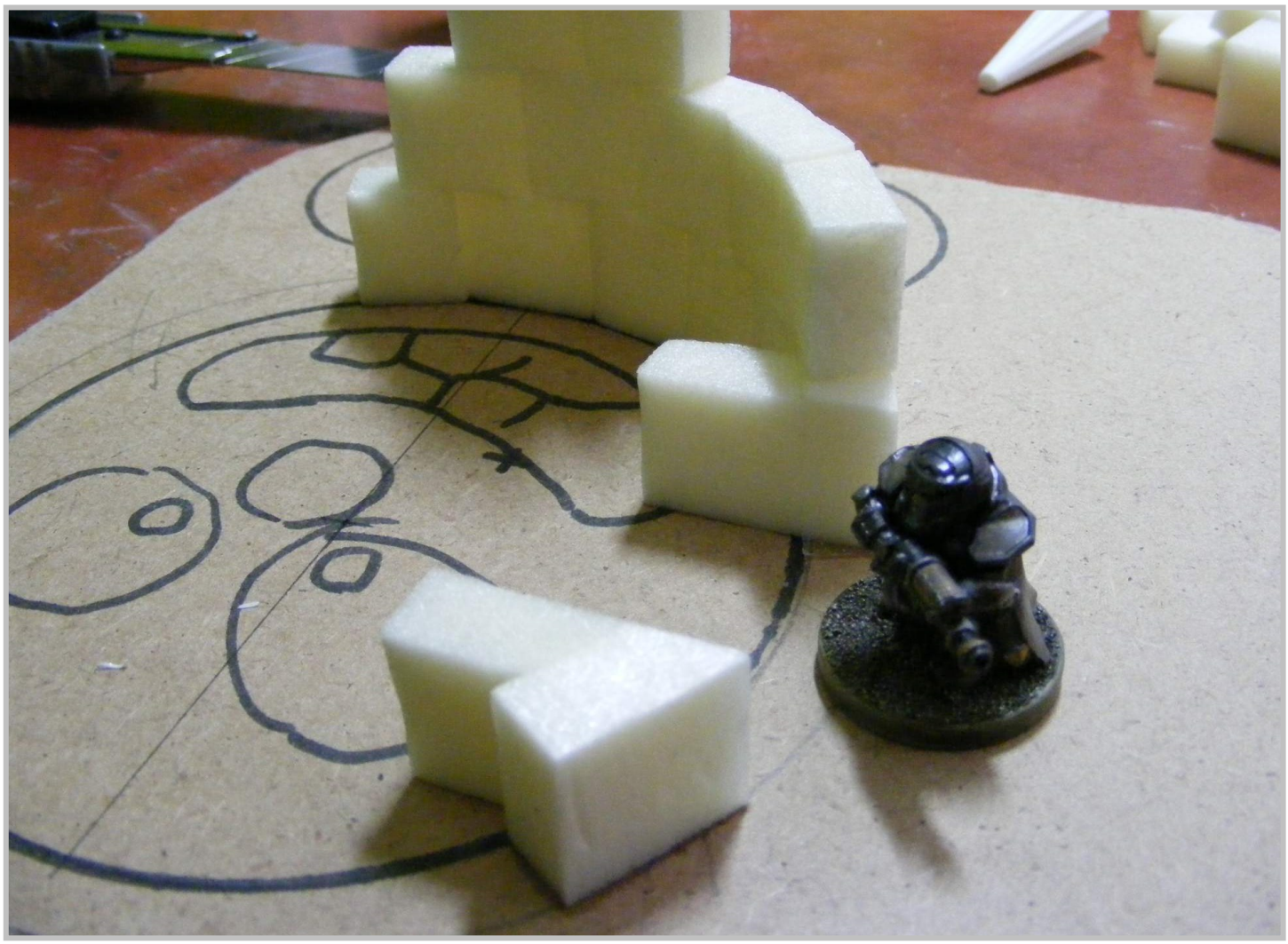
The other tools all modelers have at home:

- *Retractable knife*
- *Scalpel with disposable blades (for very detailed cutting)*
- *Brushes*
- *Pencil*
- *Toothpick*

And endless imagination!"







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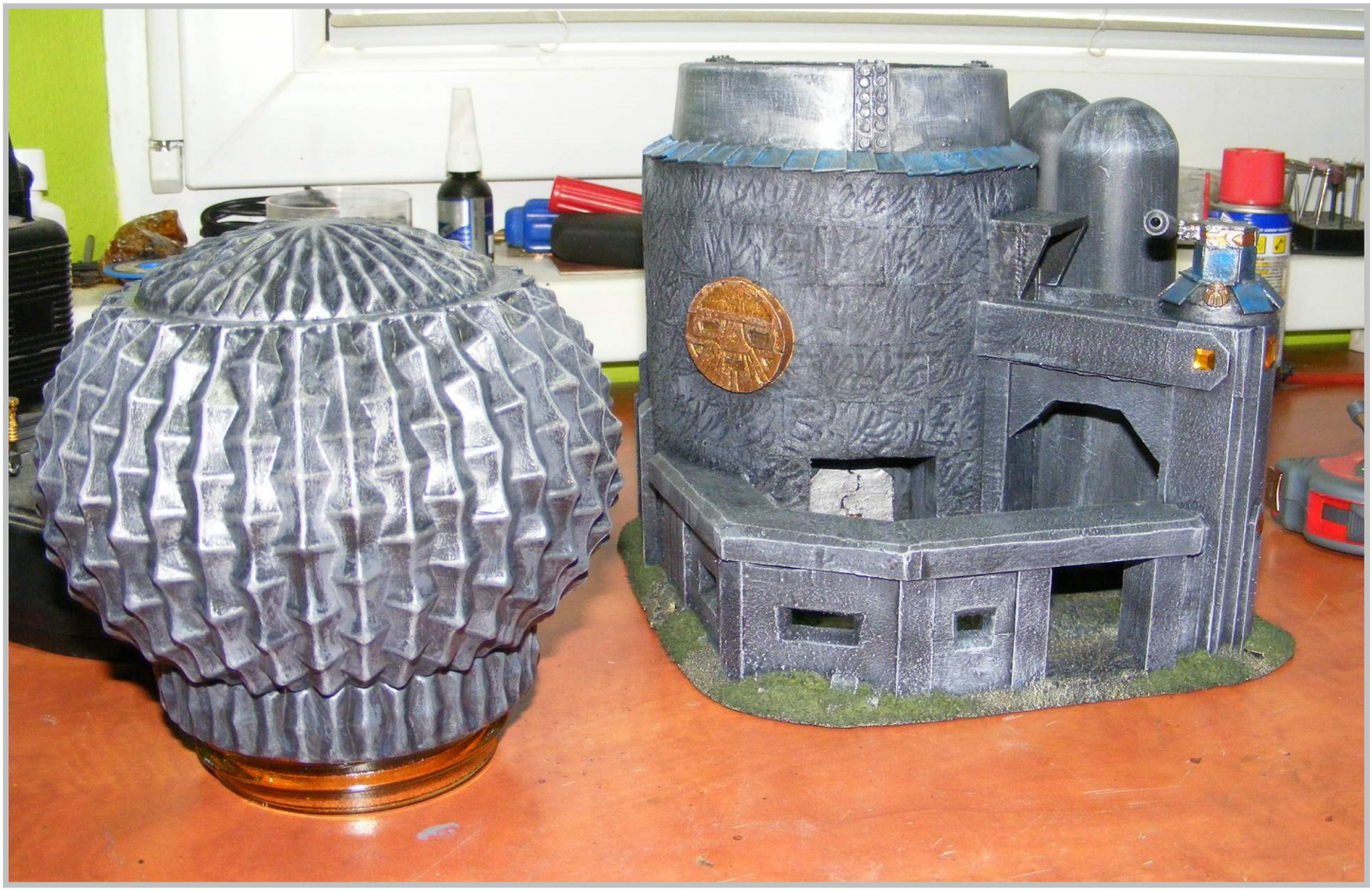
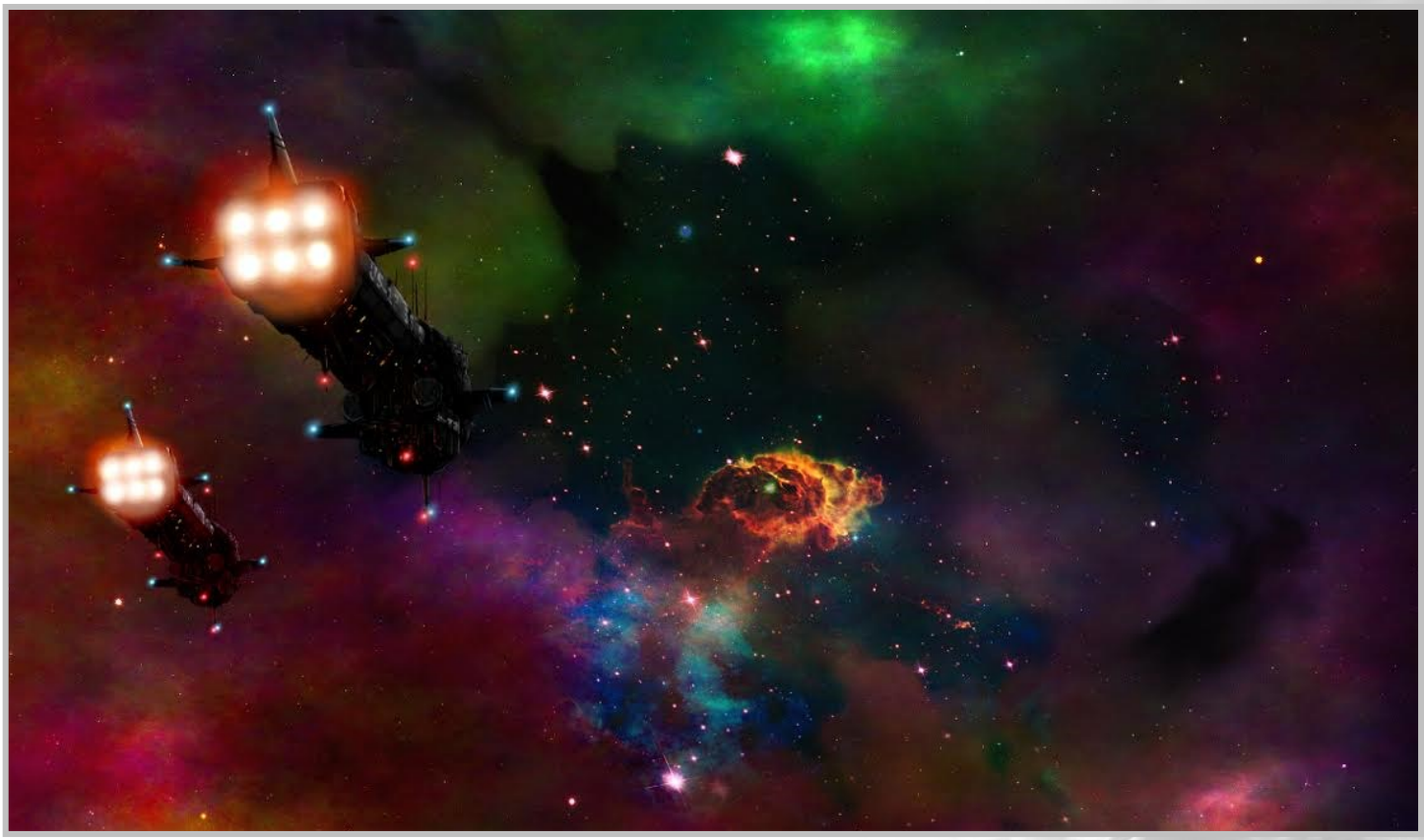




"Voyage" by Boris Samec

IRON, STEEL AND STONE

A WARPATH STORY

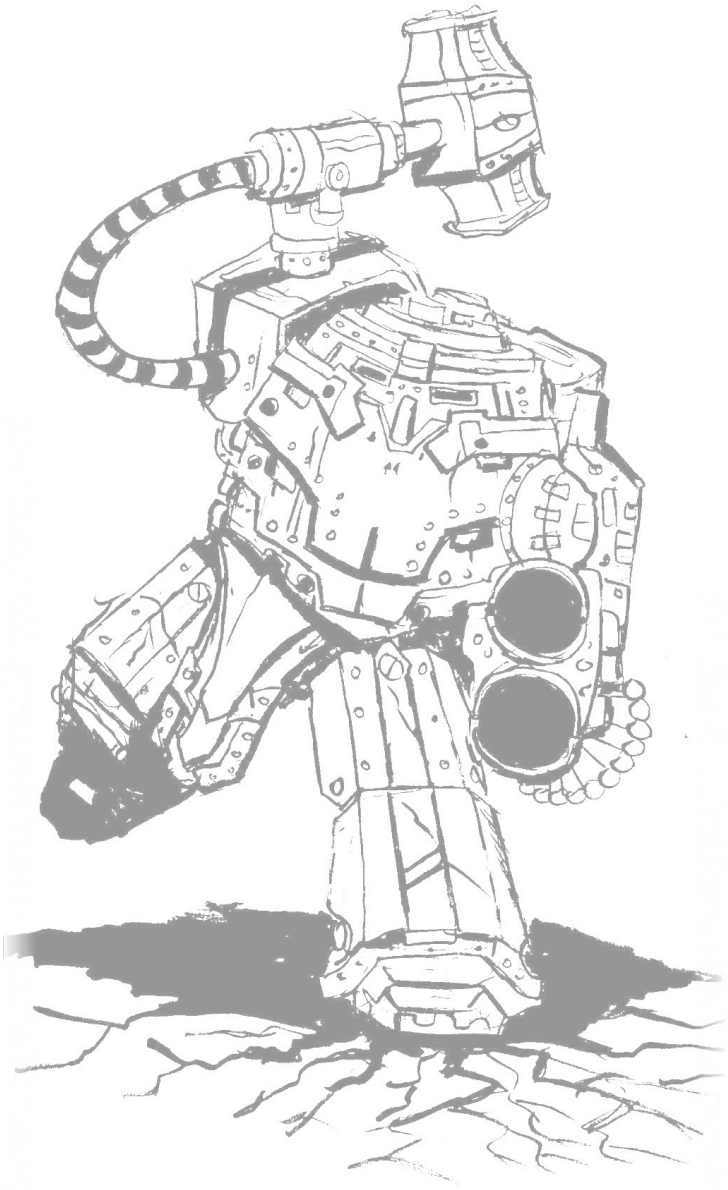
By Richard August

The hulking, armoured form of the Iron Ancestor stumbled out of the smoke. There were laser scars across the chest-piece that protected the pilot within; one arm was a blackened tusk of warped Vasted steel. The mechanised brute limped on legs pock-marked with the craters left by shrapnel. Inside the reinforced chassis of the machine, Goril Kileen struggled to breathe. How many of the Veer-myn were chasing him now? How many of his brothers had he been forced to leave behind; their bodies savaged by the strange toxin-weaponry of enemies who had clawed their way up from the earth. Ambushed. Strafed by weapons which made the air thick with radiation, with sickness.

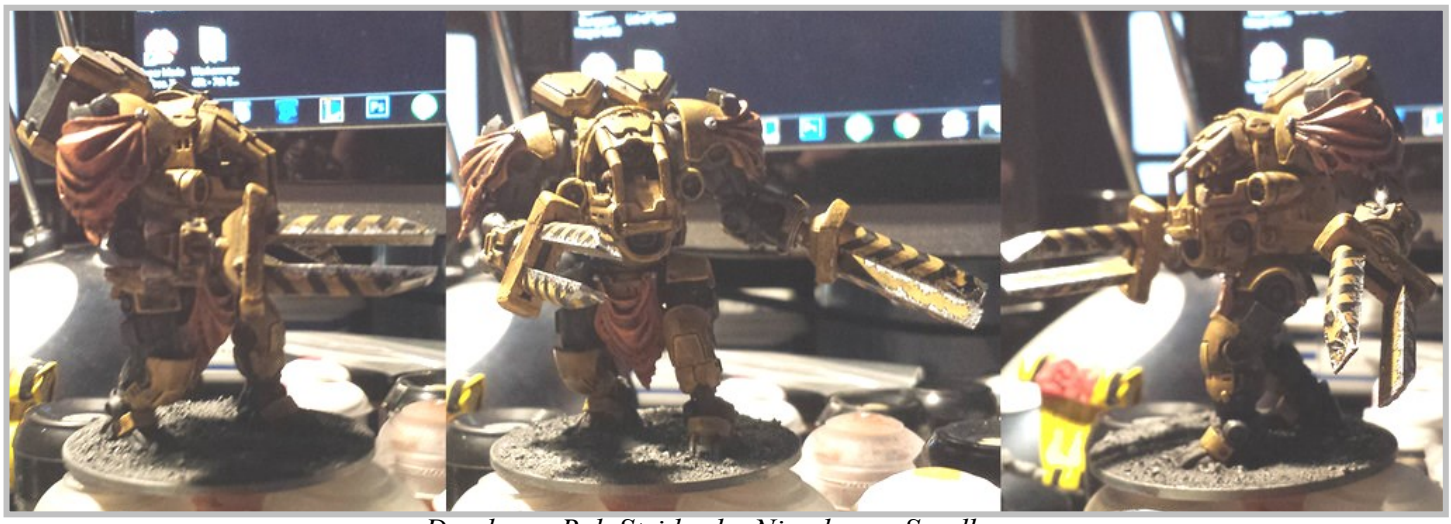
He had watched the flesh of Amril Kilthrus try to withdraw from the bones beneath it, bubbling and roiling as thickened, mustard-yellow gas had swept over him. Kileen had run, the stout remorseless legs of his Ancestral armour allowing him to break through the circuit of Veer-myn gunners; Nightmares, he had thought, as he had crushed one beneath the splayed foot of his suit. The glade-issue respirators which had been fitted into his control unit had filtered out most of the thickened fug of poison, but even then, he could taste it, on his tongue, every time he inhaled. He'd tasted blood.

He limped on, deeper into the derelict city. It was old, this place. Even as his one good arm, the one which clutched his shock-hammer, demolished the side wall of some ancient temple, he could sense the years protesting. The years were always protesting. That is what the Corporation and their damned allies would never understand- even as they spread and bartered their way towards the universe's edge- they did not listen to the crying of the years, the curving desolation of time whittling away at survival, at hope.

Kileen's people had no such illusions. Time had taught them that in the harshest of all languages- destruction. How many star-systems had the Forge Fathers watched perish before they had realised that Time could not be delayed or appeased; it could only be worshipped and obeyed. As the dust from the ruined wall settled around him, Kileen cursed himself and swore to bring forward his death by a minute, in atonement.



Forgefather Iron Ancestor by "Daedle"



Deadzone Reb Strider by Nicodemus Sandberg

Behind him, his sensors estimated a mile or less, he could hear the low swarm-murmur of Veer-myn. They were coming, ever nearer. On, he told himself, on, on, on.

The Iron Ancestral armour wheezed as it pressed through the narrow avenue formed by two sculptures. What were they of? One seemed to be of some colossal wyrm, the other…a dragon, perhaps, like the humans sometimes talked of? Or…an abyssal mollusc of the kind his father had used to catch in the lakes? Peculiar creatures. The architecture of the city reminded him of civilisations he had learned of so long ago now- before he was a Steel Warrior. Before he was anything.

As a child, looking into cryo-spheres and watching the glitter of crystallised time he'd seen them. Huge, stately buildings; conical, cupreous towers which stretched upwards, strung with jewelled bridges which spanned miles upon which information and minds darted in electric-impulse. Mind-Cities they had been called. Was that why he had been sent here, to claim old knowledge for the archives? More fallen statuary was ground into nothingness as he staggered onward. He did not curse himself this time; no point in removing moments from his life, his suit was in no state to avoid such objects. He had ordered the small auto-repair shrikes to begin their work, but, moving as quickly as he was, there was little they could do.

Veermyn ambushing an Enforcer by Marcel Popik

The shrikes were largely concentrating on his ruined arm, suturing the vast rent its destruction had left in the suit's integrity, unable to improve his speed or stability until he stopped moving. He pressed on, the noise of Veer-myn chattering growing ever louder; they would be on him soon, he knew. Or at least, whichever of them had been dispatched as scouts. They were vicious, cunning creatures, the rat-men. They struck with precision and their hateful chemical weapons; scorching flesh and cracking even the finest armour of the Forges.

Leering faces watched him from high roofs; gargoyles and monsters etched into the rock. He longed simply to turn and fight. This place was, he realised, beginning to get to him. It was an unsettling place and Kileen was alone and being hunted. He did not know why his Commander had insisted they come here, dragging the heaviest weapons they could with them. He did not know why his Commander had insisted that each of the Forge soldiers he was taking with him have the berserker's mark etched onto their shoulder-guards- the stark, curving line, defacing any other clan-markings. The berserker's mark, time's curve.

It meant that the cause to come was more important than the life which the soldier had lived before. It was the most sacred mark of his Forge-clan. And he bore it now; a distinctive cut into the living Vasted steel. Not that anyone other than one of his Forge brothers would be able to tell, given the ruins his Ancestral armour was in.

Suddenly, there was movement ahead- a jagged, hissing noise and then a furred form slunk into the open. They were bigger than humans, the Veer-myn; what had bred them? What genetic mutation had brought them, spewing their filth, into the universe? He paused now, watching the enemy through his viewing-panel, as the command-shrike scanned for other foes. He moved the arm which still functioned, the shock-hammer whining in bloody anticipation. He hoped that Time still spread out before him and that the weapon-god guiding his hammer was watching attentively. He charged.

Forgefather Steel Warriors by Martin Geibner

The Veer-myn, in its shapeless garment of faded yellow, fired its gun; a blazing warning-code shot along the mind-link which connected Kileen to his suit. It was a code attuned precisely to his brain-function, understandable only by him; even if another Forge brother were hooked to this system, he would never interpret the relayed messages- on this occasion however, the data which screamed into his neural centres was laughably simple: *avoid*. Legs already damaged gave a metallic scream as Kileen hurled himself sideways; hydraulics bursting as their battle-corroded auxiliary lines failed.

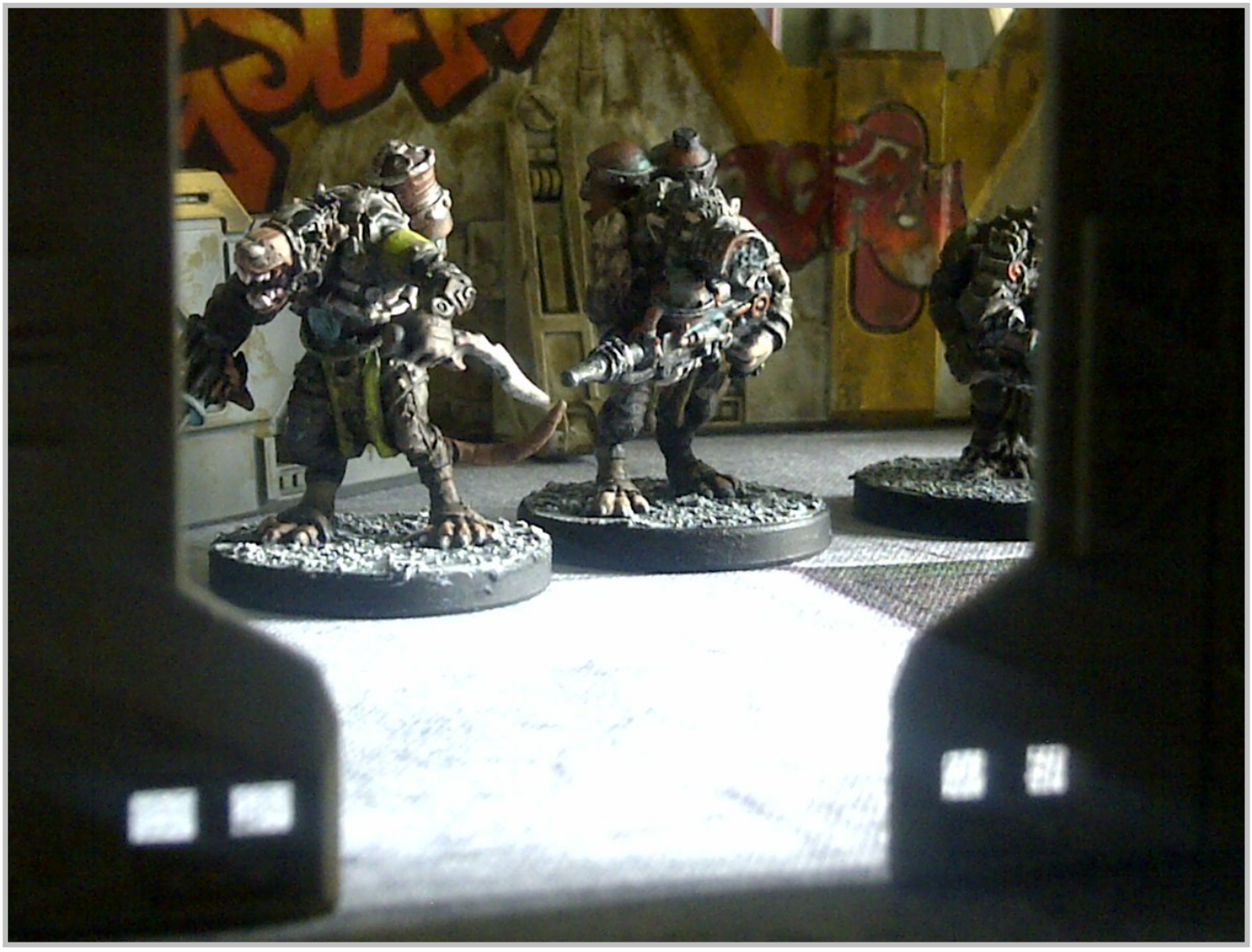
The slopping, boiling explosion which just missed Kileen's flying form incinerated a nearby temple column, rending apart solid rock and passing through the chiselled body of yet another misshapen carved creature. The rat creature gave a snap of its jaws in frustration- the sharp slap of taut muscle and overlong-tongue reminding Kileen horribly of the sound Kilthrus' flesh had made as it had boiled. Another string of neural-code reached his brain- *Scourger*, it said*, the weapon is a Scourger; if it hits you, you die*. He silently thanked the suit's analysis centres for this second piece of information. Using the hammer as a crutch, Kileen pushed the Iron Ancestor to its feet again. The Veer-myn was reloading but slowly; the rat-thing wore a backpack, which it was hitting with growing desperation, between shaking the barrel of its Scourger and looking towards Kileen.

Forcing the steel suit back into a lumbering run, Kileen bore down on his enemy. The Veer-myn, realising his weapon was useless, flung it aside and, snarling, leapt at the Forge Father's most magnificent creation. It was fast, moving with the feral celerity of a Guidean pole cat and it avoided the first clumsy sweep of Kileen's hammer. Claws, tipped with some sort of acid, scored the underside of the Ancestor's mid-section as the Veer-myn- a dishevelled mass of frantic aggression- tried to avoid the shock-hammer. Kileen brought it around again, the energy exuded by the hammer displacing air and then displacing Veer-myn brain matter as it crunched into the creature's skull.

Bright red against dirty-yellow; the rat man collapsed, into the dusty street. The scanner

whined in alarm; two more figures clutching long-barrelled scourgers were already moving along the street, weapons raised and firing. Kileen was running now- focusing on the street ahead of him, committing his scanners to detecting if any other Veer-myn had managed to get ahead of him, as the one he had just killed had. He increased the force-levels of the shock-hammer, making the few drops of blood which had managed to adhere to the metal shudder free- no sense in leaving a trail for them to follow.

The deeper he pressed into the city, the stranger the place got. More and more statues decorated the avenues, the buildings



Veer-Myn by Paul Mullis

Forgefather Iron Ancestor by Matt Gilbert

became increasingly ornate and increasingly strange. What had the Forge Fathers identified as being worth their attention in this place? True, it was a peculiar place, but it did not seem as technologically advanced as even the Corporation, let alone possess secrets worthy of being stored in the inner recesses of the Forge archives. The statues were uglier here, older and cruder. As though, as the civilisation which had made this place had grown in sophistication and stature, they had also become more beautiful. A strange thought.

It reminded him of the Old Gods of the sagas; their forms changing, falling from them, always being remade in the heat of the forge. Until Time seized even them, fixed them into a single form and left them to decay. Time, he worshipped, as did all his

Sergeant Howlett by Chris Schlumpberger

people- the only truth was the passing of time, the dwindling of history. What did these Veer-myn believe in? Were there brains capable of such metaphysical thought?

Movement was becoming increasingly difficult. Ruptured hydraulics and calcified armour was slowing him down. Each step was more difficult, drained him further. But he couldn't stop- the moment he stopped, those pursuing him would be able to pick him off at a distance. That was no way to die. That was no way to end your Time living. No honour there, no story to be told, no saga to be sung. If he could get to somewhere which might nullify the power of their scourgers, force them to come close and submit to the ministrations of his hammer…he couldn't run much longer. Time to choose Kileen, he told himself, time to choose where you die.

The Iron Ancestor lurched horribly as Kileen forced it to turn to the right, into the ruined doorway of a tall, decorously proportioned building. The place was littered with statues, hunkering shapes of strange proportions. He did not have time to investigate. His suits command-shrike was relaying the detected approach of half a dozen Veer-myn. Plaster, stone and gleaming shards of silicate showered the Ancestral suit's feet at each step- the grav-locators and stabilisers ripping up the floor as he shambled forwards. A small aperture in the dark room gave way to stairs. Kileen turned the suit about, and backed slowly up the stairs; realising quickly what he was intending, the command-shrike cut the integrated lighting panels which clung to the exterior of his suit and returned the place to darkness.

*

There was no sound of claws, no strangled swarm-language. Only the coded warnings of his scanners, imparted directly into his brain, told him that the Veer-myn were upon him. Even with the aural-calibrator at its maximum he could hear nothing. He could see nothing. Saving power for the coming fight, he had let most of the systems rest for a few minutes. He was just Kileen now, Kileen and the sensors, waiting for death in the dark. He almost wondered if he were already dead- if it weren't for the bright afterglow of coded exchanges with the sensors he might have believed it.

Anvil-priests had said that, at the end of Time, darkness would be the only substance

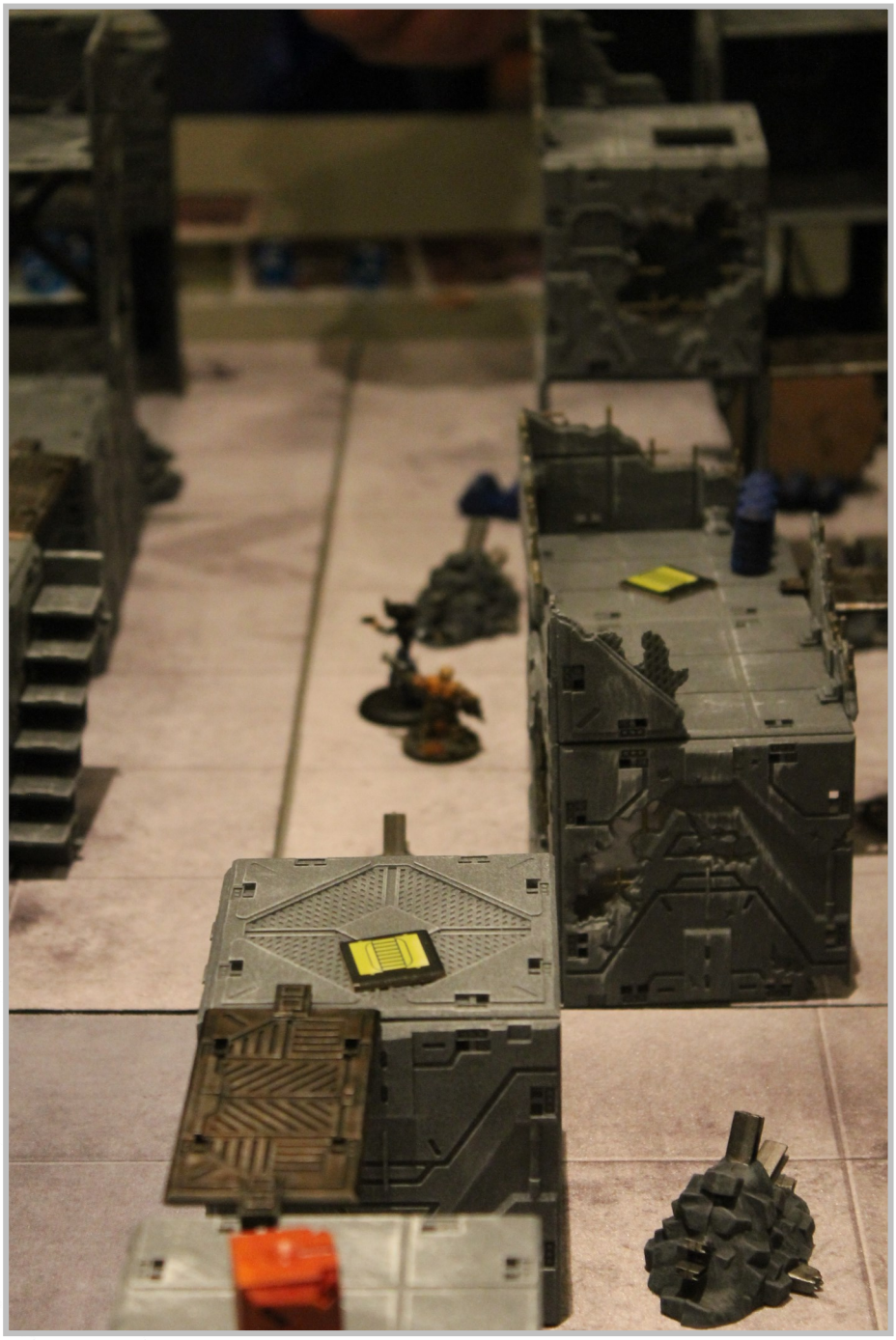
left; Forge Fathers lived in the dark most of the time, in obedience with time. But, the Priests insisted, when time ended then the Old Gods would awaken from their death-sleep and remake the world and gather the spirits of the Forge to them. Kileen wondered if this was what waiting for the Old Gods would be like; a permanently tense nothingness. Finally, the aural-calibrators heard something; the sensors had already detected the movement but the sound let him know it was real. The faint rasp of breath, the quiet click of claws. From the darkness came brilliant light. The Veer-myn were searching for him.

The suit's power systems raged back into life. As they did, Kileen saw a first Veer-myn before him, panicked, blinded. The rat-thing had been slowly climbing the stairs, cautiously hunting for his quarry. The whine of the shock-hammer seemed deafening after the near-total silence, a humming like that of struck metal filled the Iron Ancestor's innards. Magnetised joints flipped the hammer forward, striping the air with its speed, shattering bone and thundering

Deadzone Reb Strider by Paul Mullis

through the meat of one of the creatures who had slain his Forge-brothers. Three or four he had killed now. Not yet a saga's worth; not yet true vengeance but a start.

A second Veer-myn stuck its furred head around the corner, made reckless by surprise and Kileen took its head off with a single blow. Its body fell away, out of sight, and Kileen cursed- any uncertainty and surprise in his assault was lost now. As though the Veer-myn had heard this, a flurry of scourger fire deluged his position- or close to it. Kileen could feel the heat of the intense laser fire, could feel it even through the artificial coolant spores which the suit released. There were snarls of command below and the flurry of laser fire stopped. More instructions issued in the guttural, barking voice of the rat -men.



Deadzone at Adepticon 2015. Courtesy of Mantic Games

Kileen wondered whether to charge down upon the enemy, relying on momentum and surprise to protect him from the mass of scourgers- or to wait. He had the best position- he held the higher ground, he could not be overwhelmed with numbers… and yet how long did he have before Veer-myn with more powerful weapons simply destroyed the building itself, bringing it down upon him and forcing him out into massed laser fire? Or until they climbed the building and trapped him, on both sides?

Whispers of statistical advice twined through his synapses, communiques from the command-shrike data banks which scanned the room where his enemy had congregated. They were preparing something- strategies to cut his Time short. His decision was made for him- laser fire began to smash into the walls and stairs around him, a shredding storm of seething red light which ripped at the stone and steel he stood on. They were

Deadzone Marauder Ripper Suit by "Boston Miniatures"

trying to drive him out, he realised, or, at least, expose him to their guns.

Unconsciously, he tried to return fire with the hailstorm cannon which had been ripped from him, leaving behind merely a nub of smelted steel. Sensors and receptors began to confer, noisily, in his own head before he had even decided what it was he was about to do. *Inadvisable*, his command-shrike whittered at him. Kileen did not care any longer; he was almost laughing. This was war! This was the way a hero from the sagas would die. If this was the end of his Time, he would make it stretch to accommodate his story; he would make Time slow…

*

A few feet below him the withering barrage of laser fire continued. Below him the stunned, elongated heads of the Veer-myn gazed upwards. Below him, a rain of debris. Below him one of the furred murderers found his arm broken by a hunk of flying stone. Below him panic and madness and disorder. He landed, leading with his shoulder, driving it into the chest of a startled Veer-myn, and watched it vanish in a haze of blood and fragments of bone. Despite his efforts, Kileen could not prevent the Ancestor from rolling over, sprawling as the weight of the suit and momentum of his fall carried him beyond balance.

Diverting the last of the suit's energy resources to his claw-arm and the hoists

embedded in the suit's legs, he gradually levered himself up. It was taking too long, he knew. He was too damaged for this. Already the rat-men were gathering, the surprise and alarm at his sudden emergence through the stone wall dissipating quickly. One short burst of laser fire opened a ragged gash in the Vasted steel of the Ancestor's side, a fissure through which Kileen could taste air scented with dust and ruined flesh. He flung himself at a pair of his assailants, shock-hammer smashing one to the ground and leaving the second with a face which, though once been convex, was suddenly concave.

More scourger fire lacerated the overlapping steel plates which constituted his spine. He staggered, trying to turn but unable to- some component of the machine's complex cybernetics had failed- or, some tiny minutely forged cog had, under the pressure, expired. The Anvil Priests knew

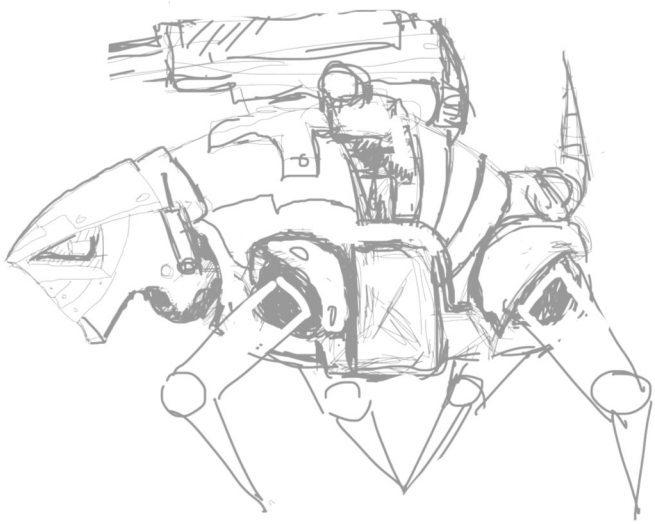
Delta squad by Nicodemus Sandberg

Veer-myn by "TSNC"

that all technology would do this: metal and the things made from it experienced Time as did the bodies of the Forge Fathers.

Sustained fire ripped away at his back plates. He could not move; or at least, could not do so with any hope of avoiding the sustained fire of the anvil-cursed rat men. Seeing him apparently broken, three Veer-myn charged-leaping and clawing at Kileen's Ancestral armour, flickering shriek-knives drawn and keening. Kileen waited. The rat things clambered over him, the laser fire ceasing.

Through the gaping wound in the Ancestor's armour, a furred hand reached up, groping towards him. Flashing code-warnings burst in his brain as shriek-knives began to carve at the armour, trying to open it up. They were all upon him now; he could see it on the



Deadzone Plague Hounds by Martin Geibner

sensors. The command-shrike confirmed it; no more Veer-myn lurked waiting. They were all stabbing and slashing at him now. Urging the power-cells into one last surge, Kileen struck.

The shock-hammer swept upwards from where it had hung, apparently useless by his side, carving through the ribs of one of the rat men. Another he crippled with a savage kick from his mechanical legs. He wondered if this was the closest he would come to taking another step. The Veer-myn were stabbing relentlessly at the thickened cable which powered the shock-hammer as he tried to raise it to deliver another killing blow. He managed it, just, driving his lone weapon into the stomach of one of the rat men he had had managed to shake free from where it clung to his torso, mashing its insides against the stone floor. Even as he did so, he felt the hammer's force dying. Goril Kileen was weaponless.

He lashed out again, relying merely on the hammer's bulk and weight to hurt something; bone broke as he swung about him but too stiffly, too slowly for him to be any real threat to the lithe forms of the Veer-myn. They carefully skirted the clumsy half-circle his Ancestor could still render dangerous. The end was coming, he knew it. With horrible deliberateness, one of the surviving Veer-myn sliced apart the auto-

joists which acted like tendons in the Ancestor's joints. Kileen fell slowly, inexorably, backwards. For the first time since he was a Steel warrior, he stared up at his enemy; ruined, broken. His Time was over. He waited for the darkness.

The click of claws on steel; sensors told him that his enemy was climbing upon him, inspecting their kill. He thanked the command-shrike, sardonically, for this information and willed it to silence. When his Time came, he would face it alone, ready for the darkness, ready to wait for the Old Gods to come for him. Through the flickering viewing panel, he saw a verminous face staring down at him. Was it smiling?

Certainly, Kileen thought, that strange twisting of thin lips and exposed teeth,

Forgefather Stormrage Veteran by Grant Mahoney

reminded him of a smile. It clutched its scourger; badly designed he thought, abstractedly, crude. Powerful, perhaps, but crude. Shameful to die at the hand of such a weapon. The Gods of the Forge would not be pleased. But what did it matter? Deep within the muzzle of the scourger he saw the glow of laser power, swelling, gathering. Soon it was too bright for Kileen to look at. He closed his eyes and waited.

A hideous grinding noise. Was it the back-pack the Veer-myn was wearing? He could see the effect its power cells were having; energising the acidic slop which sloshed back and forth in the gun's viewing chamber. Kileen saw the expression on the rat man's face change from something like gloating triumph to…panic, alarm? A shape lunged out of the darkness and the rat man who had been standing on the ruined carcass of

Helfather by Matt Gilbert

his Ancestral armour was gone. There was a thin shrieking from somewhere in the chamber, somewhere behind him. Prone as he was, he could see nothing.

He tried to will his sensors back to life, but only a desultory code-line spilt across his brain: *we have come to the end of our Time, Brother.* Over and again. The stubborn message of the dead. Accompanying the shrieking, whining sound was a dripping noise, now. Wetness. Where was the other Veer-myn? Was this some internecine fighting? He couldn't see! He had to see! For a final time he tried to force the Iron Ancestor back to life. The command-shrike simply repeated its message; the Ancestor's soul had fled. Now Kileen was trapped in a metal husk.

He sent out a last thought command: eject, and felt the last vestiges of life in the machine congeal, in order to thrust him upwards and outwards. He tumbled out of the Ancestor's chest, the fine tracery of mental link-ups ripped out from his skull as he fell into the spiteful heat of the city. He almost howled as the world, unmediated by the mechanical refinements of the Ancestral suit, pressed in upon his every nerve ending. For a moment, his short, stout body almost doubled up into itself as he knelt, fingers pressed into ears and eyes, trying to shut it out.

The pain of an unmodulated world gradually receded. Usually, those privileged to pilot the Iron Ancestors would divest themselves of the suits in the blackness of the Long Barrows- extensive hangars where the hundreds of other Ancestral suits waited to be called to offer themselves up to the ministrations of Time and the glory of the Old Gods. He looked around him- even the dimness of this chamber stung his eyes- looking for his enemies, waiting for the last flash of laser fire. He could smell something; the Forge Father's sense of smell was legendary. Even atrophied as his was by years of relying on the augmented senses of the Iron Ancestor, he couldn't miss this. An acrid, bilious scent. Veer-myn musk; tang of piss and fear. And something else; a deep, iron scent. The aroma of a spent seam in a mine; wasted minerals. Blood. Lots of blood.

He tried his enervated limbs and found them steady enough to walk. His night vision was beginning to reassert itself, remembering how to pierce the darkness, the means by which Forge Fathers had avoided the deep things for so many millennia. Then Kileen

saw the hunched, shadow shape which had snatched the Veer-myn and wished his eyes had failed to attune themselves to the darkness.

It was, he realised at once, one of the statues he had seen when he had entered the room. A hunched, hideous thing; a mass of horribly proportioned legs and arms, a head which seemed to be a mouth, jewelled stalactite teeth. And, in its hands- rocky outcrops from which sprouted hooks of stone- was the still breathing Veer-myn. The rat man's chest had been ripped open, and the yawning mouth of the living statue was chewing at ragged innards. The terrible grinding noise he had heard earlier, Kileen realised, was the statue *moving*. Every minor gesture elicited a scraping, rasping howl of tortured stone; it was the sound which a tunnel made before it began to collapse in on itself.

Kileen began to back away from the statue, which continued to consume the Veer-myn's flesh, teeth rutilant with viscera. Iron warriors did not run, Kileen repeated to himself, they did not turn and run in fear. He nearly stumbled, disturbing dust and the detritus of battle. The statue paused for a moment at the sound, its blind ravening maw snapping at the air as though trying to taste his location. Soon however, the attractions of the ripped Veer-myn flesh drew it back to finish its meal.

A second time he nearly stumbled, the floor suddenly slippery beneath his feet. He glanced down. He was standing in the midst of a second Veer-myn corpse. Blood slicked the floor, remnants of fur and one small, nacreous eyeball decorated the reddened path he was trying to follow to the doorway. Iron warriors do not run. Still the sounds of grinding stone, the pliancy of yielding flesh, reached his ears. Do not run. Do not run. It had become his mantra, the only thought which filled his brain. Everything else was merely instinct now.

Footstep, each one louder than he would have thought possible, footstep, footstep. Don't run. Don't run. Another step, another. The cold, sharp sound of his foot striking stone; the crunch of…something, beneath each lowered heel. Don't run. Scrambling hands, feeling behind him for the door. Where was it? Where was it? A sudden snapping noise…had the creature heard him? No; the statue had made the noise, extinguishing the mewling of the eviscerated Veer-myn, at last. Now there was only the harshness of stone chewing, slowly, in the shadows. Hands feeling along the wall. Then emptiness. Footstep. Don't run. Air. *Air*. He was out. Kileen repressed the urge to raise his voice in ululation. The living statue was still just within.

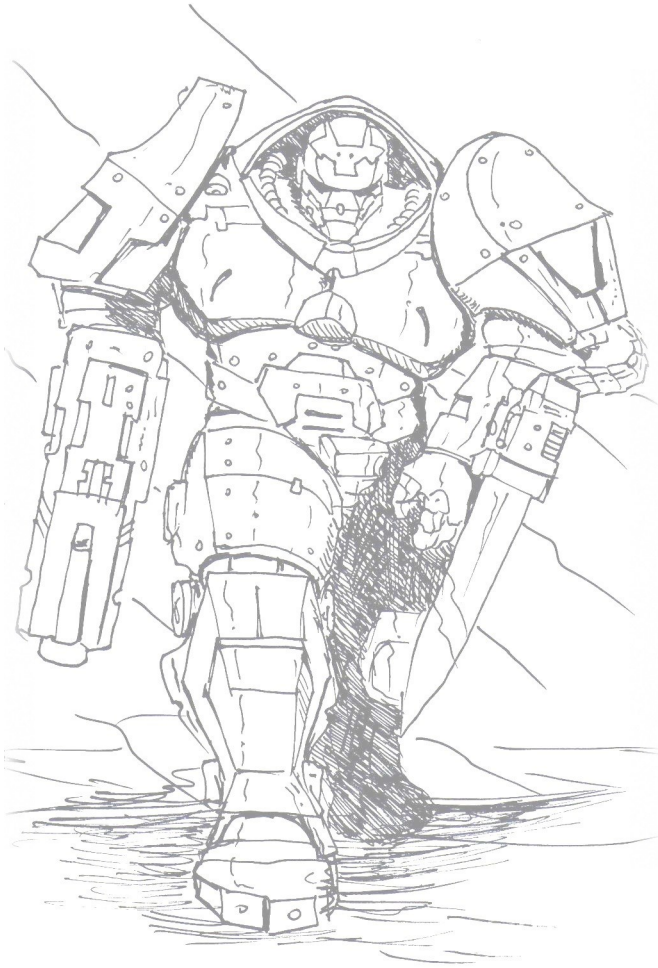
Forgefather Iron Ancestor by Martin Geibner

Deadzone Corporation Strider by Geoff Burbidge

Outside, the sun was bright enough to tarnish the ornate, metallic spirals and the stone buildings which made up the city. He breathed in deeply, once, twice, and began to march, quickly, away from the slaughter he had begun and perhaps, still had the Time to escape. The city was silent now- no longer redolent with the scratching swarm-voice of Veer-myn. He passed through the deserted streets, feeling now, more strongly than ever, how alien the place was. What had that creature been? He could recall every hearing of anything similar, even in the most obscure and esoteric of the sagas; even in the thousands of cryo-spheres he had stared into, learning everything he could, secreting it in his mind for when it was needed. Nothing which resembled that *thing*.

The darkness was behind him now. Kileen focused on that. Rescue teams would be coming soon. If he could make the edge of the city, lie low for tonight, he would be able to search tomorrow for other survivors, make it off this hideous world. The day was slowly beginning to ebb from the sky, the sunlight becoming pallid. Kileen ambled along wide parades, along which a series of pedestals stretched upwards towards the open sky. Another of the odd, angular temples he had seen earlier bordered the route. It was a peculiar place; the deeper he drew into it, the stranger it became. Had he not passed the centre of the place, yet?

Kileen stopped for a moment, trying to orient himself, to gain some idea of where he might be, where he was heading. This part of the city was different again; even the geometry of the architecture unsettled him, no Forge possessed such angles; no Anvil-Priest would tolerate the ugly intersection of



planes and angles. This place was wrong; Kileen turned about. Should he go back? Head back towards the place where he and his Forge-brothers had entered…it seemed so long ago now, but it could only be a few hours. Better that than proceed into this dank, disturbing place. There were still strange features in the architecture there of course. The faces which had leered…from… every building…There were no statues here; no demonic visages loomed from cornices; no anthropoid figures hunkered in corners, or grouped together in doorways. This was, Kileen realised, the first empty street he had encountered in this entire, anvil-cursed conurbation. The faces, the gargoyle statues, from every building and every street, road and alleyway, had gone.

He felt sweat- the sweat of fear, not the clean perspiration of the forge- start on his brow and palms. Goril Kileen began to run, his legs as short as they were pounding through the ruins of the city, ignoring his exhaustion as he sprinted back, back, to where he had come from, to where his brothers had died. He did not care any longer if the toxins of the Veer-myn burned his lungs out. He did not care if the rat men savaged him with their teeth. He simply ran from the empty, shadowed street as the sound of living stone howling in vile chorus started to fill the air.▪

Iron Ancestor by Boris Samec

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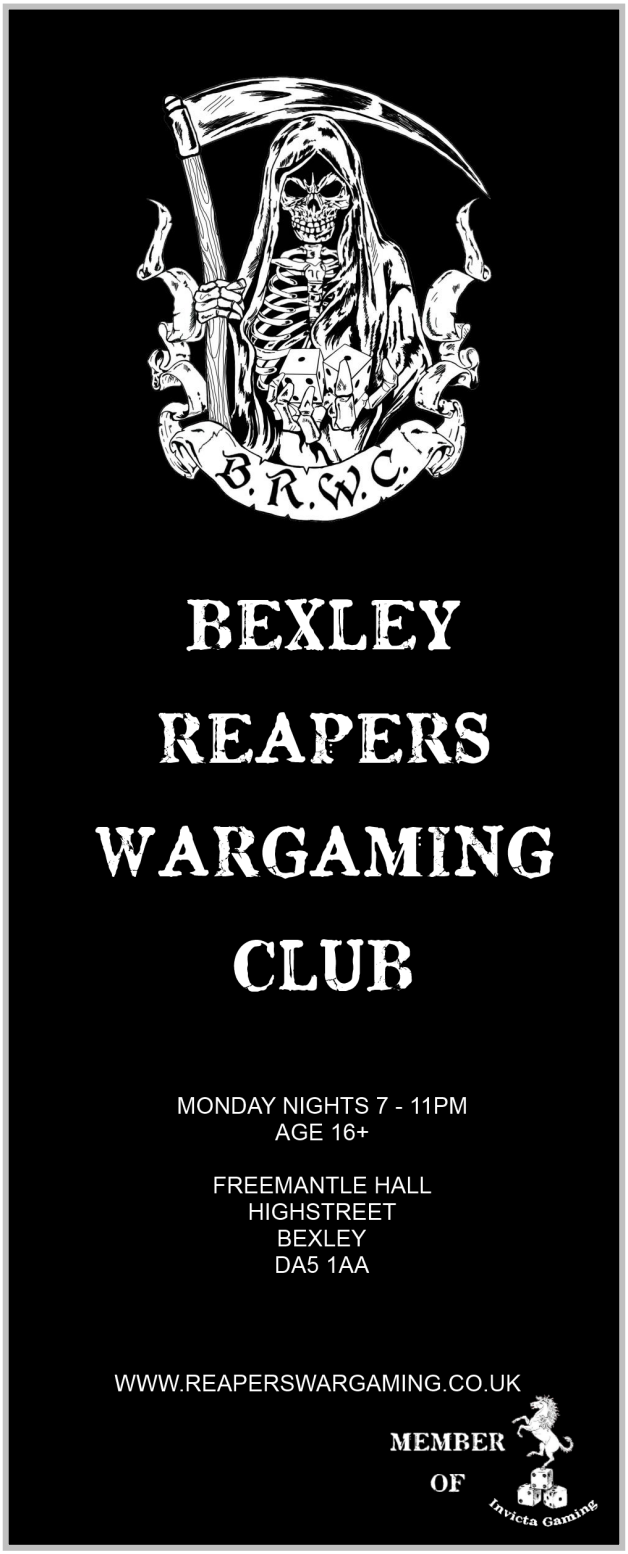

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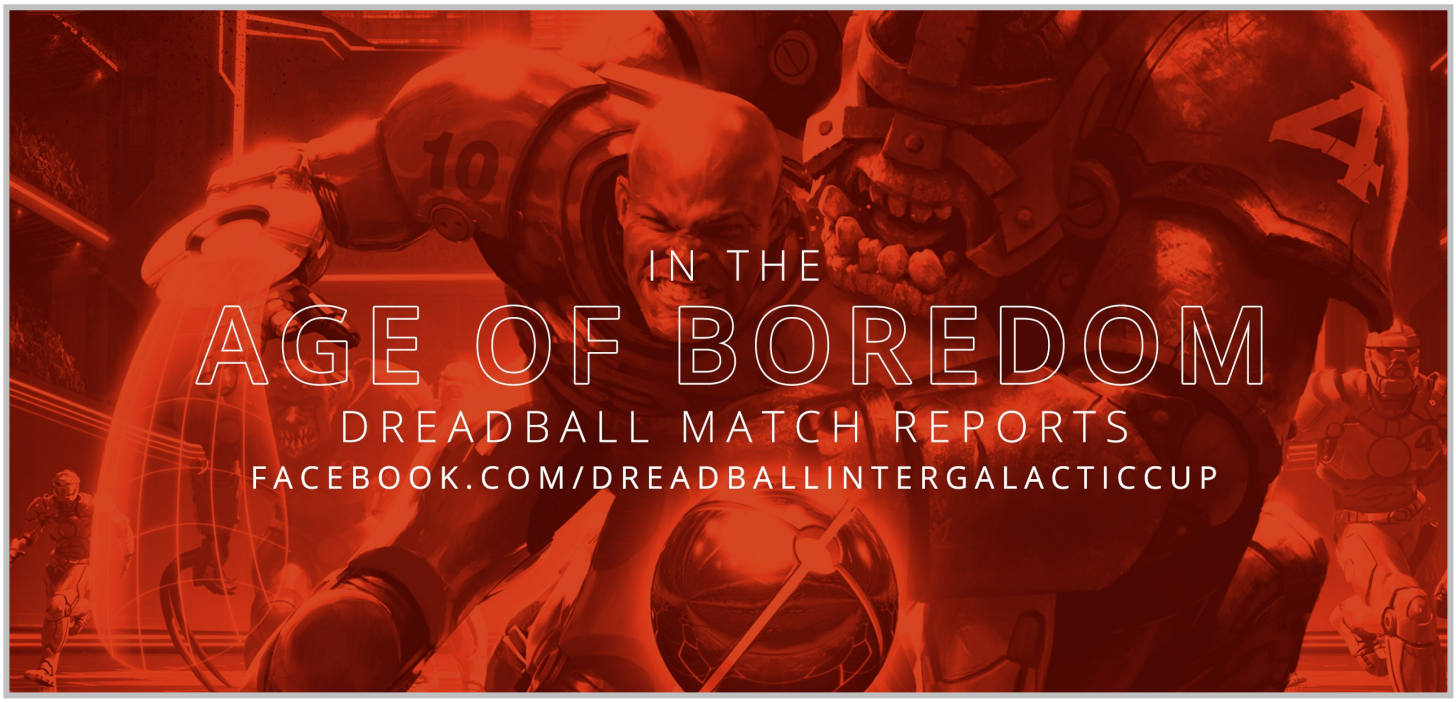

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